

AQUIDNECK LIGHT

P.O. Box 896 • Portsmouth, RI 02871

February 23, 2021

Submitted via e-mail to: Committee chair and clerk.

To the Honorable House Committee on Internet, Innovation, and Technology,

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments in support of H 5148 – The Rhode Island Broadband Development Program.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a "presumption of connectivity". However, without robust upload speeds, it is a daily struggle for Rhode Islanders to participate in distance learning, work from anywhere, utilize telemedicine, and fully engage in our democracy.

We respectfully present a few facts for consideration:

- 1) Statewide broadband planning must include open and transparent mapping, and secondly, must distinguish between local distribution fiber and long-haul backbone fiber, which are in fact, two very different things.
- 2) Only fiber optics networks provide symmetrical speeds and can be designed to run in the event of power outages.
- 3) Rhode Island has 339 miles of fiber optics backbone constructed throughout the state to give last mile providers the opportunity to expand broadband service¹. The buildout of this network was mostly funded by a \$21.3M grant from the \$4.7B Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP)², as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.
- 4) There is just one provider of fixed broadband in Newport County³ (per the FCC's dated 2015 definition of broadband as 25/3 Mbps service), with predictable results⁴.

Success stories across America for improved broadband accessibility, competitive pricing, and robust network performance all involve one common denominator.

- Creating nearly \$2.7B in community benefits⁵ and "the only Internet service provider to receive top marks for value, speed, and reliability"⁶ despite numerous legal challenges by incumbent providers⁷? 100% fiber.
- Building an open access network spanning 16 cities, allowing for consumer choice and offering symmetrical connections up to 100 Gbps⁸? 100% fiber.

¹ https://www2.ntia.doc.gov/files/oshean_case_study_report_order_number_d10pd18645.pdf

² https://itlaw.wikia.org/wiki/Broadband_Technology_Opportunities_Program

³ <https://go.usa.gov/xsW2P>

⁴ <https://www.eastbayri.com/stories/cox-outage-takes-portsmouth-offline,88184>

⁵ <https://epb.com/about-epb/news/articles/new-economic-study-documents-269-billion-in-benefit-from-chattanooga-community-fiber-optic-network>

⁶ <https://muninetworks.org/content/consumer-reports-asks-and-people-answer-love-chattanooga-hate-comcast>

⁷ <https://money.cnn.com/2015/03/25/technology/tennessee-fcc-internet/index.html>

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2e9DNwInTE4>

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- Having access to the fastest yet most affordable Internet in North America⁹? 100% fiber.
- How about when small island communities such as Islesboro, ME¹⁰ and New Shoreham, RI¹¹ decided to take matters into their own hands after repeated pleas to incumbent service providers were ignored? 100% fiber.
- Or when municipal lighting plants in neighboring Massachusetts built affordable internet service offerings in Concord, MA¹² and nearby Taunton, MA¹³? 100% fiber.

For the reasons listed above, and our steadfast belief in old school Internet ideals and the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)'s Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct¹⁴, we enthusiastically support H 5148.

Respectfully,

Theodore Pietz, Principal Technical Consultant

⁹ <https://www.techdirt.com/articles/20200719/09352044927/study-community-broadband-drives-competition-lowering-costs.shtml>

¹⁰ <http://townofislesboro.com/committees/islesboro-municipal-broadband/>

¹¹ <https://www.blockislandtimes.com/article/voters-approve-2021-budget-bond-issues/57700>

¹² <https://concordma.gov/481/Service-Plans-Pricing>

¹³ <https://www.tmlp.com/internet/residential/>

¹⁴ <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics>